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ABSTRACT

A description is given of the work and resources of the Wellness Councils of America, a national umbrella organization established to provide direction and support services to community-based Wellness Councils. A Wellness Council is a membership organization made up of employers that promote wellness programs at the worksite. (JD)

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WELLNESS COUNCILS OF AMERICA: BUILDING A NATIONAL NETWORK

by: Robin Darst Hanus
Wellness Councils of America

Wellness Councils of America (WELCOA) is a national umbrella organization dedicated to providing direction and support services to community-based Wellness Councils. WELCOA's mission is to promote healthier lifestyles for all Americans.

A Wellness Council is a membership organization made up of employers that promote wellness programs at the worksite.

Through the activities sponsored by Wellness Councils, business leaders come together with health care professionals and service-providers to promote health at the worksite. Individual Councils are non-profit membership organizations supported by dues from corporate members.

WELCOA has tripled the number of new Wellness Councils in the past year. Councils in 44 cities are now affiliated with the national headquarters, located in Omaha, NE. It is estimated that the current Wellness Councils are made up of 1,500 member companies and other employer organizations representing more than 1.1 million employees across the country. Other Councils are in the formation stages throughout the country.

Progress to Date

*28 Wellness Councils have been formally established
*16 more cities are actively forming Wellness Councils
*10 other cities are extremely interested and, with help from WELCOA, will enter early stages of formation
*100 Councils is the projected goal for 1992
*4 of the Councils (Minnesota, New Mexico, West Virginia, and Delaware) are statewide Wellness Councils
*27 states contain Wellness Councils at this time.

WELCOA acts as a national clearinghouse for its members; serves as a catalyst in the business community to start Councils and provides direct consultation and materials; provides field services for ongoing Council operations in the areas of structure, funding, budget, programs, solicitation of new members, and guest speakers; and coordinates and distributes promotional information including a national newsletter and public service announcements, and organizes conferences on worksite wellness.

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The educational resources available from WELCOA include:

Publications:

Healthy, Wealthy and Wise This 1989 manual covers how to plan, implement and evaluate worksite wellness programs. Over 100 pages, it contains camera ready forms and surveys in a 3-ring binder.	$10.00
Wellness at the School Worksite Step-by-step guidelines for planning, managing and evaluating programs for school personnel.	10.00
Wellness at Work: A Practical Guide for Health Promotion in Small Business	4.00

Videos:

Wellness at the School Worksite A 12-minute video dramatizing the need for worksite wellness programs and documents successful efforts in school systems for faculty and staff.	45.00

These resources must be prepaid, with a $3 shipping and handling charge.

A WELLNESS COUNCIL: WHAT IS IT AND WHAT DOES IT DO?

A Wellness Council is a group of employers who have joined together voluntarily to provide programs at the worksite to help their employees pursue more healthful lifestyles.

This mission of the Council is based on the conviction that the quality of life in any community is in large degree measured by the health of its people and that the workplace offers a logical and convenient opportunity to effectively present health promotion activities.

In promoting wellness programs at the worksite, the Council acts as:

A catalyst in gaining the support of chief executive officers in the business community in providing health promotion programs at the worksite;

A counselor to individual businesses seeking to establish wellness programs and in other matters relating to worksite wellness endeavors;

A clearinghouse that makes health information and related resources available to the business community;

A coordinator in sponsoring community-wide wellness activities.

The Council, which is supported financially by its member companies, pursues its mission by providing leadership to the growing ranks of concerned and knowledgeable business executives who believe that well-designed health promotion programs are a measurable benefit for individual workers, a plus for productivity and a substantial influence in controlling health care costs.

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

The Family Fitness Festival includes bike, swim, run/walk, aerobics and water aerobics as a celebration of corporate wellness. Division trophies are based upon participation.

-Wellness Council of the Midlands-

A television series of health promotion specials were produced in cooperation with a local PBS station. Call-in segments permitted the viewing audience to question health professionals.

-Chattanooga Wellness Council-

"Worksite Wellness Week" in Philadelphia is open to the entire community. Activities include health screenings, health education, organized walks, a 10K race, and various other health events. Recent seminars on AIDS and Womens Health Issues were extremely successful.

-Wellness Council of the Delaware Valley-

A community-wide smoking cessation challenge gained 350 "Quit and Win" participants who are surveyed quarterly to their ongoing success.

-Roanoke Alive & Well Coalition-

The Quit and Win Campaign in Sheridan, Wyoming, included classes on smoking cessation, brown bag sessions at the public library, a live radio show where people brought in their "cigs" and denounced their habit. The local cable channel, newspaper and bank billboards supported the campaign. The county attorney provided testimonial on the public service announcements on how well he felt since quiting smoking.

-Wellness Council of Sheridan County-

Health $ense conferences attract regional participation on trends and topics such as elder care.

-Minnesota Worksite Wellness Resource-

A conference on child care with national expert, Ellen Galinsky, achieved over 300 corporate registrants. The second annual child care conference is again co-sponsored by the Lt. Governor's office.

-Milwaukee Wellness Council-

A delegate assembly on "Stress: Coping Techniques for Survival" with an accompanying "Stress Rest" Focus Pac was a recent event.

-Wellness Council of Tucson-

The employees of the city of Miami were involved in the prenatal health intervention and the Corporate Challenge recognized "the most fit company in South Florida."

-Wellness Council of South Florida-

Forty-three teams entered the Corporate Olympics with sixteen events. The teams trained over a four month period and participation was emphasized over winning.

-Wellness Council of Northwest Indiana-

An all day conference on corporate health promotion is being held November 9. The Governor is bestowing plaques to the founding member companies.

-Delaware Center for Wellness-

A year-long event called the "Wellness Make Over" has the entire community cheering the two participants who have made significant changes over time. A monthly feature in the local newspaper records their progress.

-Wellness Council of Muscatine County-

A $27,000 grant from the state health department to the Wellness Council enabled five worksites to obtain extensive program. Cholesterol and blood pressure are topic areas for the intervention. The program screened over 70% of the employee groups onsite.

-WorkWell (Lincoln, NE)-

The "Weigh to Work" program offered a six week weight loss campaign to member companies.

-Wellness Council of the Piedmont-

The Center for Health Promotion has set five year program goals for their community surrounding reducing heart disease, cancer and accidental deaths for specific populations. Over 200 volunteers participate in the delivery of programming.

-Center for Health Promotion (Lewellen, NE)-

HealthNet has 420 workplaces throughout the State as registration sites for their Eat Right Campaign, a ten week program that obtained national press.

-HealthNet, New Mexico-

Over 300 corporate registrants attended the third annual Wellness in the Workplace conference featuring national presenters and the Governor of West Virginia.

-West Virginia Wellness Council-

The Future

Plans for the third year of operation include new manuals and videos to further the corporate health promotion field. The Wellness Council movement has enhanced worksite wellness initiatives and has assisted many corporations to move from general awareness campaigns to comprehensive behavior change programming.

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